

Finland's Dilemma

by

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### Summary

Finland's role as an active belligerent against Russia was inevitable. A history of a thousand years of hostility and bitter fighting between the Russians and the Finnish people has made it impossible that Finland and Russia should fight in common cause. Finnish armies will fight for Russia only when Russia has conquered Finland and conscripted her men.

Finland's only purpose has been to protect her independence and the lives of her citizens. Therefore we in this country should look at the Finnish problem with some tolerance least we condemn them hastily and without understanding. The Finns in their failing hour asked for aid from Germany the only great power who could give it only to save themselves from a fate abhorred by every Finnish citizen, life under a Russian government. We in this country cannot understand this hatred of Russia; but it is bred into every Finn and has its foundation in a thousand years of defensive fighting against Russia. The citizens of the United States must not forget their pledge of justice to all peoples even though that should mean the thwarting of Russian ambitions.

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## Finland's Dilemma

Finland stands today in a tragic position. She is doomed to annihilation by the great powers of the world which are pledged to the preservation of democratic government everywhere. The roots of Finland's sorrow are to be found in history. The antipathy which exists between the Russians and the Finns has been made a thing which will never die by the twenty five major wars fought in the past eight hundred years on Finnish soil against the Russians. Throughout the wars of the earliest times the Finnish people relied strongly upon their alliance with Sweden for aid and support against the Russians. The union of the Swedes and the Finns in one nation, Sweden-Finland, proved very beneficial to the Finnish people. From the days of the middle ages this nation continued as a vital force in the north and remained a united nation until the times of the Napoleonic disturbances. It was then in the year 1809 that the Russians succeeded in annexing Finland after a war of conquest. The Finnish people never became reconciled to Russianization and at the first opportunity revolted. The opportunity came in 1918 more than one hundred years after the annexation when the Russian armies fighting Germany collapsed. The Finns rose in revolution determined to be free of Russian government forever.

The revolution against Russia was followed by bloody fighting between Communistic elements supported from Russia and the White factions within Finland. The Whites were victorious but not without the aid of a German army which intervened at a



decisive hour to ensure the victory of the Whites who were failing in the fight against the Reds who were being supplied from Russia. The aid tendered by the Germans at this critical time was very important in strengthening the ties between Finland and Germany.

With the nation established the Finnish people went to work with great zeal and determination to make their country a fine place to live. They were determined to show the world that free men and women living under a democratic system of government could make a better nation than the Russian system ever could. With her limited resources, without coal, iron, or oil, and with only limited land of poor quality for agriculture, the Finns made their nation one of the finest in Northern Europe in the short span of one generation in the years from 1918 to 1941. The literacy rate in Finland is one of the highest in the world and higher education is shared by a greater proportion of the people than in any other country. The eagerness with which the Finns sent their most highly trained experts to countries all over the world to become familiar with the most recent technological developments so that they might be applied without loss of time to the development of the Finnish nation and the attainment of the high standard of living which had already been reached in other parts of the world but had been denied to the Finnish people as part of the Russian Empire is an example of the alertness and breadth of vision of the Finnish government.

The Finns were experiencing remarkable success with their newly launched nation when the great conflicts between the ever expanding Germany and her neighbors caused repercussions in Finland.



The Russians suspecting that Finland was planning a war against her in collaboration with Germany suddenly made far reaching demands upon Finland which would <sup>have</sup> ensured Finnish neutrality by placing strategic fortifications, absolutely essential to the defense of Finland against Russian attack, in the control of Russian armies. Finland attempted to compromise but that proved to be impossible because Russia was confident that she could crush Finland if she resisted. The negotiations came to a halt with the Russian attack upon Finland. The Russians were partly successful in the war in that Finland ceded one third of her territory to Russia along with certain important fortifications in the Aland islands. However the attitude of the Russians following their victorious war became increasingly more insufferable and it became obvious that their ultimate intention was the destruction of the Finnish republic.

Within a year after the conclusion of the peace treaty Russia attacked Finland again. A few weeks later Germany attacked Russia with smashing blows and at the same time Finland invited Germany to send her armies through Finland to bolster Finnish defenses which were crumbling under the sledge hammer attacks of numerically superior Russian forces. The result of the second war has been that Finland has regained all of her lost territory and some territory formerly Russian with more advantageous frontiers for defense.

Throughout all the years of war, devastating with its effects on the nations manhood and the national economy, Finland has fought only to maintain its integrity as a nation against Russian attack. Finland accepted help from Germany only because the rejection



of that aid would have meant that the Finns would have become one more of the scores of peoples that have been swallowed up and scattered by the Russian giant in its mission of conquest.

The United States is now at war with Germany and her allies. While the United States was neutral prior to the outbreak of war the problem of Finnish-American relations was difficult at best; and it now seems to be reaching the breaking point. Many are too quick to say that any ally of Germany must necessarily be our enemy. The state department warns Finland that it must conclude a peace with Russia or suffer our displeasure. Fortunately the state department understands that it is impossible for Finland to stop fighting because the only condition for peace is the equivalent of absolute surrender. It is possible that Russia's insistence upon a formal severance of relations and a declaration of war may yet become so strong that it cannot be sidestepped.

At that time a decision must be made. The United Nations have no great love for Russia but all recognize the right of the Russians to their homeland which has been theirs for centuries; but by the same token other peoples have the same right. Are we to permit this nation to become a party to a Russian aggression which is just as merciless as the wars of the Germans? This war will have been in vain if Russia is permitted to glut herself upon the flesh and blood of her smaller neighbors. The world will have fought to throw out one set of aggressors only to make room for another. We must not become a party to a Russian



domination based on conquest. We should give a sympathetic ear to the weary people of Finland, who have so many descendants on these shores, as they cry out to the world in their desperate and perhaps futile fight to make for themselves a nation to call their own.

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